

Letter to the Columbus City Council
David Probst
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I'm David Probst, Principal of Stonehenge Structured Financial Partners. I would like to add my support to the proposal before City Council to shore up funding for Nationwide Arena and the arts through an Arts Fee.

Originally from Cleveland, I moved to Columbus in 1982 to attend Ohio State. Since graduation, I have worked downtown my entire career. When I moved to Columbus, there was no Arena District, the Short North was just a dream and the arts community was developing. The Arena District site was a vacant state penitentiary, surrounded by other blighted or vacant buildings.

Central Ohio has become my home and Columbus is recognized as one of the great America cities that is not only home to The Ohio State University, but also known as a clean vibrant city that supports a diverse community. Columbus has undergone a miraculous transformation and Nationwide Arena has been a big reason for that. It not only put Columbus in the major leagues by drawing a National Hockey League team, but the area has become a major residential and commercial magnet. Nationwide Arena is our city's civic arena, serving far more than hockey and music fans, but also schools and those who come to Columbus for meetings and conferences.

The Arts community has grown and become more diverse. The Arts also helps to attract and retain professionals to sustain our region's workforce and attract new businesses to central Ohio. A great example is the Short North District, one of the most vibrant spots in our City and home to over 300 exciting businesses.

As a Blue Jackets ticket holder, who has attended other events at Nationwide Arena and venues in other cities, I can tell you that while the on-ice or on-stage product is important, the overall fan experience cannot be overlooked. This requires investment to maintain and improve the facility as it ages.

To continue to offer these diverse events, we must invest in our infrastructure. Nationwide Arena is in danger of becoming obsolete for lack of capital improvement funds and the arts community requires additional funds to expand quality offerings and fund needed capital improvements of aging buildings. I am generally skeptical of tax increases; however, the Arts Fee does not ask for general taxpayer funds to finance the Arena or the Arts. As currently proposed, only the ticket fees generated at the Arena would be used for the Arena's capital needs, which means only those who use it and benefit from it will contribute.

A modest ticket fee will provide the steady, stable and predictable revenue stream the Arena has lacked, help fund the arts at levels they deserve, and keep Columbus one of the most vibrant cities in the country.